

Message Text

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70

ACTION ARA-10

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E. O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, CI

SUBJECT: CATHOLIC CHURCH TAKES ON THE CHILEAN GOVERNMENT

1. SUMMARY: THE LEADERSHIP OF CHILE'S CATHOLIC CHURCH LASHED OUT IN RESPONSE TO THE MISTREATMENT OF THREE BISHOPS RETURNING FROM THE CONFERENCE IN ECUADOR (SEPTTEL). END SUMMARY.

2. THE PERMANENT COMMITTEE OF THE EPISCOPAL CONFERENCE OF CHILE'S CATHOLIC CHURCH ISSUED A FORECEFUL STATEMENT TO A GALLERY PACKED WITH FOREIGN AND LOCAL PRESS THE MORNING OF AUGUST 17. THE DECLARATION SAID THAT THE ECUADORAN GOVERNMENT'S "ARBITRARY ACTION, ENCOURAGED BY FRIENDLY GOVERNMENTS, REPRESENTED A MANIFEST ACT OF HOSTILITY AGAINST THE CHURCH." IT CONDEMNED "THE ANTAGONISM STIRRED UP BY SOME ELEMENTS OF THE CHILEAN MEDIA, PARTICULARLY 'LA SEGUNDA' (SENSATIONALIST), 'EL CRONISTA' (GOC-OWNED) AND NATIONAL TELEVISION (GOC-OWNED)..... THESE MEDIA HAVE DISTORTED THE TRUTH AND PROVOKED A CLIMATE OF HOSITILITY AGAINST THE CHURCH, PERSONIFIED BY ITS PASTORS."

3. THE BISHOPS THEN TURNED DIRECTLY TO THE GOC. " THE DUTY OF GOVERNMENT IS TO DEFEND ITS CITIZENS' HONESTY AND LIBERTY,
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NOT TO BESMIRCH THEIR NAMES." BUT, IT ALLEGED, "MEMBERS OF

THE DIRECTORATE OF NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE (DINA) DIRECTLY PARTICIPATED IN THE ATTACKS ON THE RETURNING BISHOPS." IT COMPARED THE STONINGS AT PUDAHUEL AIRPORT WITH EVENTS "WHEN UNDER THE ALLENDE GOVERNMENT, ANTISOCIAL ELEMENTS FOUGHT WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF ORDER. TODAY CHILE HAS ADDED REPRESENTATIVES OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH TO THOSE BEING ATTACKED."

4. THE DECLARATION CITED PROVISIONS OF CANON LAW AUTOMATICALLY EXCOMMUNICATING ANYONE HARMING A BISHOP OR ARCHBISHOP, AS WELL AS ANYONE WHO "LEGISLATES, ORDERS OR DECREES LIMITATIONS ON THE LIBERTY OR AGAINST THE RIGHTS OF THE CHURCH, OR THOSE WHO DIRECTLY OR INDIRECTLY IMPEDE ITS ECCLESIASTICAL OBLIGATIONS." THE CHURCH BELIEVES IN PERSUASION, SAID THE STATEMENT, BUT HAS NO CHOICE BUT TO DEFEND ITSELF WHEN ITS LEADERS ARE ATTACKED. (THE TEXT IS NOT COMPLETELY CLEAR TO US, BUT APPARENTLY THE DECISION ON EXCOMMUNICATION IS RESERVED TO THE HOLY SEE.)

5. THE DECLARATION CAST THE ATTACK AGAINST THE BISHOPS IN A BROADER CONTEXT -- AS PART OF A GENERAL PROCESS AFFLICTING LATIN AMERICA: "GOVERNMENTS RELYING UPON THE UNAPPEALABLE JUSTIFICATION OF NATIONAL SECURITY CHOKE BASIC LIBERTIES, CONSTRAIN ELEMENTAL HUMAN RIGHTS AND SUBJECT THEIR CITIZENRY TO THE WHIM OF A FEARFUL AND OMNIPOTENT POLICE STATE." FURTHER: " THE CHURCH CANNOT REMAIN PASSIVE OR NEUTRAL IN THE FACE OF SUCH A SITUATION." IN SUPPORTING CHRIST'S MANDATE FOR HUMAN DIGNITY AND EFICIENT PROTECTION OF THE LIBERTY AND RIGHTS OF THE INDIVIDUAL, HOWEVER, "THE CHURCH DOES NOT INTEND TO PUT ITSLEF FORWARD AS AN 'ALTERNATIVE POWER' NOR TO USURP POWERS NOT BELONGING TO IT... IN VITURE OF THE PASTORAL CHARGE CHRIST HAS LAID UPON US, WE APPEAL TO THE CONSCIENCE OF ALL CATHOLICS, PARTICULARLY THOSE HHO HAVE ASSUMED RESPONSIBILITIES OF GOVERNMENT, TO DRAW UPON THEIR PATRIOTISM AND FAITH AND BEND THEIR ENERGIES TO THE RECONSTRUCTION OF A SOCIETY BASED ON LAW AND THE MOST ZEALOUS RESPECT FOR HUMAN DIGNITY. FOUR OUR PART WE WILL CONTINUE TO CARRY OUR OUR ROLE AS PASTORS OF THE CHURCH."

6. THE DECLARATION CONCLUDED BY "THANKING GOD THAT, IN THE PERSON OF SOME OF OUR BROTHER BISHOPS WE HAVE SUFFERED IN HIS NAME ... MANY OTHERS, WHO ARE NOT BISHOPS, HAVE SUFFERED AND CONTINUE TO SUFFER EQUALLY BAD PRIVATIONS: ARBITRARY DEPRIVATION OF LIBERTY LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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AND HONOR OR LOSS OF EMPLOYMENT OR FUNDAMENTAL HUMAN RIGHTS."

7. THE EMBASSY WILL COMMENT FURTHER AS INFORMATION BECOMES AVAILABLE.
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